

Gambling Ads in Canada

An Academic and Policy Study of the Ontario Model

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Executive Summary

Why it matters: In the evolving Canadian gambling landscape, there is a growing interest to understand the role of marketing and the effectiveness of the advertising regulatory framework. This report aims to inform policy decisions through two processes:

- 1) A review of academic, peer-reviewed publications from the last 10 years on gambling advertising and its impact on consumers' gambling intentions and behaviours; and
- 2) A review of existing regulatory measures in Ontario and a comparison of those rules to other leading jurisdictions.

Our study team uniquely combines leading academic scholars in gambling research with industry analysts from the leading advisory firm in sports betting and online gambling. This combination of scholarly depth and industry-leading strategic insight provides a foundation for delivering nuanced, actionable recommendations that are well-aligned with both the current regulatory landscape and proactive in addressing future challenges in the changing gambling sector.

In aggregate, our findings highlight a distinct trend: regulatory policies are evolving at a faster rate than the accompanying evidence base. We caution that this misalignment may lead to regulations that are either overreaching relative to their intended goals or insufficiently nuanced, thus failing to address the subtleties of modern gambling advertising practices.

The bottom line: We recognize that policy may serve multiple goals that extend beyond research topics.

- Policy can be aligned with fulfilling cultural expectations that depart from empirical findings or broader scientific theory, but policymakers should be made aware of where evidence ends, and social preferences begin.

As Ontario's gambling market expands, so too does the complexity of its regulatory challenges.

- The approach to regulation in Ontario was shaped by the necessity to integrate grey market operators into a regulated framework, ensuring that all market participants adhere to consistent standards of consumer protection and ethical advertising.
- Many considerations about the current state of the market are dynamic and may change without regulatory intervention.